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UNCLAS VIENNA 000854

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G/IWI (L Khadiagala) AND EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CHILD MARRIAGE: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE

REF: SECSTATE 36341

THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

(U) The following responses are keyed to reftel:

A) (U) The legal age of marriage in Austria is 18 for males and females. Minors aged 16-17 can marry by petitioning the courts for a waiver. The courts will grant a waiver if they consider the person sufficiently mature for marriage and if the minor has the consent of his/her parents. If the parents do not consent, the courts can permit the marriage if the courts deem that no justifiable reasons for the parents' refusal exist.

B) (SBU) The Vienna NGO Orient Express has told Emboffs that underage marriage is occasionally a problem among immigrants from some Muslim countries (such as Turkey and Egypt). There are instances in which an immigrant has entered into an underage marriage with a teenage girl in their home country and has then returned to Austria with her. Orient Express reports encountering a few such cases while counseling immigrant women. Since the immigration status of the underage spouses generally derives from their husbands' residency, the girls may find themselves in a difficult situation if marital problems arise.

C) (U) There are no U.S.-funded initiatives in Austria to reduce the incidence of child marriage or address the negative effects of this practice.

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